Courtney Kisat , professor of history at Southeast Missouri State University, will kick things off with a presentation about the rich history of folk music in the Mississippi River Valley and how steamboats afforded opportunities to musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Jess Stacy, and John Hartford.

The Jumper Cables - an acoustic trio from Cape Girardeau playing an eclectic blend of American folk songs including old time fiddle tunes of the Ozarks region. Members are Steve Schaffner (fiddle & vocals), Charlotte Cervantes (piano) and Nicholas Smentkowski (upright bass).

Snowbird St. Band a well-known duo on the acoustic folk circuit, Betsy Brink (guitar, vocals) and Cody Dawkins (banjo, vocals) bring energetic interpetations to traditional folk songs along with solid original numbers.

Swamp Boys - a trio of brothers from rural southern Illinois bring a hard-driving acoustic sound. Members are Josiah (banjo, vocals), Jarron (guitar, vocals), and Matthew Evans (guitar, vocals), joined by special guest Tanner Troutman (standup bass)

This event is dedicated to creative types everywhere, and especially in loving memory to Gregg Bonelli (Dad)

~ That's the way the world goes round ~

About the venue

The iconic Port Cape Girardeau Building was first constructed in 1836 and has endured many calamities from both man and nature.

Today's Port Cape is more often the site to enjoy good BBQ, live music, and celebrations with family and friends.

Longtime Port Cape proprietor Doc Cain invites you to peruse the original artifacts, artworkl, and memorabilia decorating the restaurant - including a full-size riverboat wheel!

PORT CAPE GIRARDEAU RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE
PORT CAPE
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Bollinger Center for Regional History at Southeast Missouri St. University

FOLK FEST

2025

Cape Girardeau, MO

Saturday Schedule

5pm: Welcome + Folk Music History

6-7:30pm: The Jumper Cables

7:45-9:15pm: Snowbird St. Band

9:30-11pm: Swamp Boys

Why Folk Fest?

Folk music happens everywhere, but Cape Girardeau is unique as the geographic center of the Mississippi River. As a historian and a longtime lover of folk music, I wanted to plan an event to commemorate this place, explore authentic music of the region, and show support to folk musicians and artists.

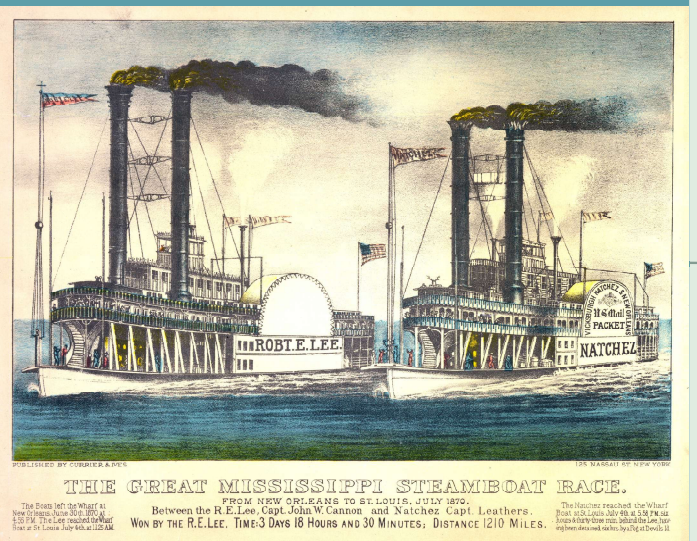
I'm so glad you could make it to the first Cape Folk Fest! Please enjoy the performances and let us know how you liked it.

~ Courtney Kisat, Folk Fest organzier

Did you know...

About the Great Steamboat Race from New Orleans to St. Louis, July 1870?

One pilot docked when heavy fog descended over the river just outside of Cape, believing his opponent had also done so for safety. He was wrong, and lost the race!


ROBT.E.LEE
NATCHEZ
THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI STEAMBOAT RACE.
FROM NEW ORLEANS TO ST.LOUIS, JULY 1870.
Between the R.E.Lee, Capt. John W. Cannon and Natchez Capt. Leathers.
Won by the R.E.Lee. Time:3 Days 18 Hours and 30 Minutes; Distance 1210 Miles.

What is folk music?

Here are some quotes that help convey the right feeling ...

A folk song is ... what's wrong and how to fix it.
Woody Guthrie, 1940

A (folk) song ... has got some kind of point to make. It's a song with teeth.
Pete Seeger, 1963

Folk music is about stories that speak to the human condition. These songs are our songs.
Ben Hunter, 2013

Folk music is social and it's political, and so we're always trying to sing anthems for things that we truly believe, even if they're impossible.
Willi Carlisle, 2024

Did you know...

The fiddle is Missouri's official state musical instrument!

Union General Ulysses S. Grant used the Port Cape building as his headquarters for a short time during the Civil War.

Folkorist Alan Lomax considered the banjo to be the only indigenous American folk instrument. Since then, folk music scholars have helped identify its true roots in western Africa.